



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

AN HISTORIC NIGHT IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS.



TAKE it that the pages of *Chambers's Journal* are strictly closed to purely party politics, and that within its leaves we are happily free from the strife of the polemic and the dialectic of the political partisan; but the present article has no political significance, and it espouses the cause of no party in the State.

The centre of the national life, in so far as questions of government or diplomacy are concerned, is generally believed to be the House of Commons; and it may, perhaps fairly enough and without arrogance, claim a pre-eminence as distinctively the 'Witenagemot,' or Parliament of the Nation. The House of Lords lives presumably, and also as a matter of everyday experience, in a calmer air and under serener skies. The solemnity and decorum of its proceedings are seldom ruffled by bursts of impassioned eloquence or storms of party feeling, while the 'other House' is, alas! at times but a tempest-tossed ship of State; it seems to feel more acutely the emotions pertaining to the popular will, and it possesses a temperature which can readily rise to fever-heat and a pulse which beats, on occasion, with the force of cyclonic systems.

Yet, be that as it may, the centre of political interest was certainly transferred on the night of the 8th of July 1884 from the Representative to the Hereditary Chamber. It was the debate on the second reading of Mr Gladstone's Reform Bill of that year. The bill had been voted, in its successive stages, by considerable majorities in the House of Commons; but its passage through the Lords was more of an uncertainty, and the popular interest was keenly directed towards the action of the Upper Chamber in regard to the measure. An amendment to the second reading had been proposed by the late Earl Cairns, formerly Lord Chancellor of England in the Conservative administration, and it was said that peers who had not even seen the inside of their gilded chamber for years were coming up from the country in force to give it their support.

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The amendment was to the effect that, while that House would assent to an equalisation of the franchise, this should not be granted unless it were accompanied by a contemporary measure for the redistribution of seats. That, I may observe in passing, was a principle which was subsequently accepted by both parties in the State, and was given effect to by agreement between them in a bill which became law in the following session of parliament, and under which, among other results, the representation of Scotland was raised to its present quota of seventy-two members. But at the time of which I speak it was not admitted by the Liberal government of the day that redistribution ought necessarily to accompany the lowering and equalisation of the franchise, and a fierce controversy was being waged over the question of Reform or No Reform.

The debate had occupied the whole of the previous night, and stood adjourned. I was fortunate enough to secure, through the medium of an influential friend, a seat, or at least a place, under the gallery on the government side of the House near to the division door. Beside me, or rather immediately in front of me, were Mrs Gladstone and her daughter, now Mrs Drew. The House quickly filled, and an atmosphere of unwonted animation and suppressed excitement pervaded the place. All the approaches were thronged, and there were many applicants for admission whose claims had to be denied.

The Lord Chancellor took his seat on the wool-sack punctually at half-past four, and by five the debate was in full swing. I am not going to weary my readers with any attempt to follow it. But it was, I believe, almost unique in recent times alike for the number of distinguished politicians and statesmen of eminence who took part in it, and for the serried ranks of peers, on both sides of the House, who came to vote on the question of the hour. The great division of the Liberal party on the question of Home Rule had not then taken place, and the speakers on the government side of the House included the late Lord Granville,

the Duke of Argyll, the late Lord Selborne, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, and several others of the first rank; while on the Opposition side the late Lord Derby, Lord Salisbury, and the late Lord Carnarvon, among others, delivered important speeches. Perhaps two of the best speeches made were those of the late Lord Brabourne (the Knatchbull-Hugessen of fairy-tale fame) and Lord Rosebery, who followed him, and who, although, of course, then well known as a fluent, graceful, and able speaker, and a coming politician of eminence, had not as yet held any high office in the State. In Gilbertian phrase, he likened the coronet of his brother-peer to a crown of thorns, 'for it had been,' he said, 'the noble Lord's consistent and miserable fate, ever since his elevation to that House, to be compelled, evidently against his own most ardent inclinations, always to vote in opposition to the party to which he had always been understood to belong.'

But the hour of dinner has come and gone, and now it is waxing late, while still the debate goes on with unabated vigour. The temper even of that august House is, for the time, keenly set, and there is an undertone of excitement and vital interest in the air, for every one feels that history is most probably even now being made. The galleries of the peeresses have filled to overflowing, and are ablaze with jewels. All the great 'political ladies' of the day are there. So also are full the galleries allotted to distinguished strangers and the diplomatic body. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh, with the old Duke of Cambridge, are in their accustomed seats on the cross-benches; and but yesterday it is said that the well-polished hat of the Heir-Apparent was in serious danger of annihilation from the demonstrative eloquence and perfervid gesticulations of that well-known Scottish peer (speaking from the seat immediately behind His Royal Highness) who Mr Disraeli once said possessed, in an eminent degree, 'the cross-bench mind.' Round the steps at the back and sides of the throne are grouped a large number of privy councillors and Cabinet ministers, in the front rank of whom are prominently seen the alert figure of Mr Gladstone, with the never-forgotten flower in his button-hole, and the larger frame of Sir William Harcourt, while Mr Chamberlain is not far off. There were no portents *then* of coming separation and the breaking-up of Cabinets, although the seeming desertion of General Gordon in the far Soudan, during five long months of siege and stress, had even now given to the ministry its first keen blow!

The scene is indeed a brilliant one. The bright red-leather benches, the carved and gilded paneling of the walls, the polished candelabra, the crowded galleries, make up a wonderful combination of colour; while the necessary interests of motion and life are found in the gathering of peers temporal and spiritual (for the lawn of the bishop is there in great force) which sits below, and in the speech and action of the statesman and the orator.

The hands of the clock point towards the hour of twelve, and the end seems at last to be drawing near. All that can be said on both sides has apparently been said, the leaders of the House and of the Opposition have wound up the debate, the Foreign Secretary has taken up his royal-red despatch-boxes, Lord Salisbury has gracefully bestowed upon Lord Rosebery the title of 'the patron of Midlothian,' while several well-known peers have hurried in from the precincts in time to record their votes. The division-bell rings, and all strangers, below the gallery at least, have perforce to retire to the lobbies and await there the result of the vote. There is a subdued buzz of excitement and conversation, and one instinctively feels that a question of national import is hanging in the balance and will shortly be decided for good or ill.

The clock strikes one, and now a small group, joined for a few moments by the Prime Minister, and in which he is naturally the central figure, sits on the stone seats in one of the inner lobbies or stands about and waits. Somebody remarks—I think it is Mrs Gladstone to her husband—'What will the country say of this to-morrow?' when suddenly the doors are thrown open, and there is an excited rush, in which we all join. But it is soon followed by a pervading silence as the figures of the division are read out, and the Lord Chancellor announces in stately tones that the 'Not Contents' have it. Nobody is surprised at the result, for the Opposition benches have been thickly peopled all through the night, and the weight of argument did seem also, somehow, to rest with them; but some of us wonder, nevertheless, with Mrs Gladstone, how the country will take it 'to-morrow.' The audience, however, quickly melts away, most of us glad to find, after the strain of listening to an eight-hours' debate, the seductions of a hansom homeward and a speedy repose, but the press-man and the journalist to his 'copy' and his 'leader-writing,' and to tell the British public, some four hours later—'How the Lords threw out the Franchise Bill.'



JOHN BURNET OF BARNS.

CHAPTER XLI.—I MAKE MY PEACE WITH GILBERT BURNET.



SLEPT till dawn the dreamless sleep of those who have drowned care in bodily exertion. It was scarce light when I awoke, and with the opening of the eyes there came with a rush the consciousness of my errand. I leaped out of bed, and sitting on the edge, considered my further actions.

First I sought to remove from my person some of the more glaring stains of travel. There was water in the room, bitter cold and all but frozen, and with it I laved my face and hands.

Then I opened the chamber door and stepped out into one of the long corridors. The house was still, though somewhere in the far distance I could hear the bustle of servants. I cast my mind back many years, and strove to remember where the room was in which the morning meal was served. I descended the staircase to the broad, high hall, but still there was no sign of other occupants. One door I tried, but it was locked; another with no better fate, till I began to doubt my judgment. Then I perceived one standing ajar, and, pushing it wide, I looked in. Breakfast was laid on the table, and a fire smoked on the hearth. I entered and closed the door behind me.

There was a looking-glass at the far end, and as I entered I caught a glimpse of my figure. Grim as was my errand, I could have laughed aloud at the sight. My hair unkempt, my face tanned to the deepest brown, my strange scarlet clothes, marred as they were by wind and weather, gave me a look so truculent and weird that I was half-afraid of myself. And then the humour passed, and all the suffering of the past, the hate, the despairing love, the anxious care, came back upon me in a flood, and I felt that such garb was fitting for such a place and such a season.

I warmed my hands at the blaze and waited. The minutes dragged slowly, while no sound came save the bickering of the fire and the solemn ticking of a clock. I had not a shade of fear or perturbation. Never in all my life had my mind been so wholly at ease. I waited for the coming of my enemy as one would wait on a ferry or the opening of a gate—quiet, calm, and fixed of purpose.

At last—and it must have been a good hour—I heard steps on the stair. Clearly my cousin had slept long after his exertions. Nearer they came, and I heard his voice giving some orders to the servants. Then the door was opened, and he came in.

At first sight I scarcely knew him, so changed was he from the time of our last meeting. He was grown much thinner and gaunter in countenance, nor was his dress so well cared for and trim as I remembered it. The high, masterful look which his face always wore had deepened into

something bitter and savage, as if he had grown heart-sick of the world and cared nought for the things which had aforesight delighted him. His habit of scorn for all that opposed him and all that was beneath him had grown with his years and power, and given him that look as of one born to command—ay, and of one to whom suffering and pain were less than nothing. As I looked on him I hated him deeply and fiercely, and yet I admired him more than I could bear to think, and gloried that he was of our family. For I have rarely seen a nobler figure of a man. I am not little, but in his presence I felt dwarfed. Nor was it only in stature that he had the pre-eminence, for his step was as light and his eye as keen as those of a master of fence.

He had expected a very different figure to greet him at the other side of the table. In place of a lissome maid he saw a grim, rough-clad man waiting on him with death in his eyes. I saw surprise, anger, even a momentary spasm of fear, flit across his face. He looked at me keenly; then with a great effort he controlled himself, and his sullen face grew hard as stone.

'Good-morning to you, Master John Burnet,' said he. 'I am overjoyed to see you again. I had hoped to have had a meeting with you in the past months among your own hills of Tweedside, but the chance was denied me. But better late than never. I bid you welcome.'

I bowed. 'I thank you,' I said.

'I have another guest,' said he, 'whom you know. It is a fortunate chance that you should both be present. The old house of Eaglesham has not held so many folk for many a long day. May I ask when you arrived?' The man spoke all the while with great effort, and his eyes searched my face as though he would wrest from me my inmost thoughts.

'An end to this fooling, Gilbert,' I said quietly. 'Marjory Veitch is no more in this house. With the escort of my servant she is on her road to Tweeddale. By this time she will be more than half-way there.'

He sprang at me like a wild thing, his face suddenly inflaming with passion.

'You, you!' he cried, but no words would come. He could only stutter and gape, with murder staring from his visage.

As for me, the passion in him roused in me a far greater.

'Yes,' I cried, my voice rising so that I scarce knew it for mine. 'You villain, liar, deceiver, murderer, by the living God, the time has now come for your deserts! You tortured my love and harassed her with hateful captivity; you slew her brother, your friend—slew him in his cups, like the coward you are; you drove me from my house and

lands ; you made me crouch and hide in the hills like a fox, and hunted me with your hell-hounds ; you lied and killed and tortured. But now I am free, and now you will find that I am your master. I have longed for this day—oh, for so long !—and now you shall not escape me. Gilbert Burnet, this earth is wide, but it is not wide enough for you and me to live together. One or other of us shall never go from this place.'

He made no answer, but only looked me straight in the face, with a look from which the rage died by degrees. Then he spoke slowly and measuredly. 'I think you are right, cousin John,' said he. 'The world is too small for both of us. We must come to a settlement.' And in his tone there was a spice of pity and regret. Then I knew that I had lied, and that this man was stronger than I.

For a little we stood looking across the table at each other. There was an extraordinary attraction in the man, and before the power of his keen eyes I felt my wits trembling. Then, with his hand, he motioned me to sit down. 'The morning air is raw, cousin John. It will be better to finish our meal ;' and he called to his servant to bring in breakfast.

I have never eaten food in my life under stranger circumstances. Yet I did not fear aught, but satisfied my hunger with much readiness. As for him, he toyed and ate little. Once I caught him looking over at me with a shade of anxiety, of dread, in his gaze. No word passed between us, for both alike felt the time too momentous for any light talk. As the minutes fled I seemed to discern some change in his manner. His brows grew heavier, and he appeared to brood over the past, while his glance sought the pictures on the walls and my face in turn with something of fierceness. When all was over he rose and courteously made way for me to pass, holding the door wide as I went out. Then he led me to a little room at the other side of the hall, whence a window opened to the garden.

'You wish to be satisfied,' he said, 'and I grant you that the wish is just. There are some matters 'twixt me and thee that need clearing. But first, by your leave, I have something to say. You believe me guilty of many crimes, and I fling the charge in your teeth. But one thing I did unwittingly, and have often repented of. Michael Veitch fell by his own folly and by no fault of mine.'

'Let that be,' said I. 'I have heard another tale.'

'I have said my say ; your belief matters nought to me. One thing I ask you : Where has the girl Marjory gone ? If fate decides against you, it is but right I should have her.'

'Nay,' I cried passionately, 'that you never shall. You have caused her enough grief already. She hates the sight of you even as I, and I will do nothing to make her fall into your hands.'

'It matters little,' he said, with a shrug of his

great shoulders. 'It was only a trifling civility which I sought from you. Let us get to work.'

From a rack he picked a blade, one such as he always used in any serious affray, single-edged and basket-hilted. Then he signed to me to follow, and opened the window and stepped out.

The morning was murky and damp. Fog clothed the trees and fields, and a smell of rottenness hung in the air. I shivered, for my clothes were thin and old.

Gilbert walked quickly, never casting a look behind him. First we crossed the sodden lawn, and then entered the pine wood which I had skirted on the previous night.

In a little we heard the roaring of water and came to the banks of the stream, which, swollen by the melting snows, was raving wildly between the barriers of the banks. At the edge was a piece of short turf, some hundred yards square, and drier than the rest of the ground which we had traversed. Here Gilbert stopped and bade me get ready. I had little to do save cast my coat and stand stripped and shivering, waiting while my enemy took his ground.

The next I know is that I was in the thick of a deadly encounter, with blows rattling on my blade as fast as hail. My cousin's eyes glared into mine, mad with anger and regret, with all the unrequited love and aimless scheming of months concentrated in one fiery passion. I put forth my best skill ; but it was all I could do to keep death from me. As it was I was scratched and grazed in a dozen places, and there was a great hole in my shirt which the other's blade had ripped. The sweat began to trickle over my eyes with the exertion, and my sight was half-dazed by the rapid play.

Now, it so happened that I had my back to the stream. This was the cause of my opponent's sudden violence, for he sought to drive me backwards, so that when I found myself near the water I might grow bewildered. But I had been brought up to this very trick, for in the old days, in Tweeddale, Tam Todd would take his stand near the Tweed and strive to force me back into the great pool. In my present danger these old memories came back to me in a flood, and in a second I was calm again. This, after all, was only what I had done a thousand times for sport. Could I not do it once for grim earnest ?

In a very little I saw that my cousin's policy of putting all his strength out at the commencement was like to be his ruin. He was not a man built for long endurance, being too full in blood and heavy of body. Soon his breath came thick and painfully ; he yielded a step, then another, and still a third ; his thrusts lacked force and his guards were feeble. He had changed even from that tough antagonist whom I had aforetime encountered, and who taxed my metal to the utmost. Had it not been that my anger still held my heart, and admitted no room for

other thoughts, I would even have felt some compunction in thrusting at him. But now I had no pity in me. A terrible desire to do for him as he had done to my friends gripped me like a man's hand. The excitement of the struggle, and, perhaps, the peril to my own life, roused my dormant hate into a storm of fury. I know not what I did ; but, shrieking curses and anathemas, I slashed blindly before me like a man killing bees. Before my sword-point I saw his face growing grayer and grayer with each passing minute. He was a brave man—this I have always said for him ; and if any other in a like position, with an enemy at his throat and the awful cognisance of guilt, still keeps his stand and does not flee, him also I call brave.

Suddenly his defence ceased. His arm seemed to numb and his blade was lowered. I checked my cut and waited with raised point. An awful delight was in my heart, which now I hate and shudder to think on. I waited, torturing him. He tried to speak, but his mouth was parched, and I heard the rattle of his tongue. Still I delayed, for all my heat seemed turned into deadly malice.

Then his eyes left my face and looked over my shoulder. I saw a new shade of terror enter them. I chuckled, for now, thought I, my revenge had come. Of a sudden he crouched with a quick movement, bringing his hands to his face. I was in act to strike, when from behind came a crack, and something whistled past my ear. Then I saw my cousin fall groaning, with a bullet through his neck.

In a trice my rage was turned from him to the unknown enemy behind. With that one shot all rancour had gone from my heart. I turned ; and there, running through the trees up the river-bank, I saw a man. At the first look I recognised him, though he was bent well-nigh double and the air was thick with fog. It was the fellow Jan Hamman.

I ran after him at top speed, though he was many yards ahead of me. I have never felt such lightness in my limbs. I tore through thicket and bramble, and leaped the brooks as easily as if I were not spent with fighting and weak from the toils of months. My whole being was concentrated into one fierce attempt, for a thousand complex passions were tearing at my heart. This man had dared to come between us ; this man had dared to slay one of my house. No sound escaped my lips ; but silently, swiftly, I sped after the fleeing figure.

He ran straight up-stream, and at every step I gained. Somewhere at the beginning he dropped his pistol ; soon he cast away his cap and cloak ; and when already he heard my hot breathing behind him, he cried out in despair and flung his belt aside. We were climbing a higher ridge, beneath which ran the stream. I was so near that I clutched at him once or twice ; but each

time he eluded me. Soon we gained the top, and I half-stumbled, while he gained a yard. Then I gathered myself together for a great effort. In three paces I was on him and had him by the hair. But my clutch was uncertain from my faintness, and with a wrench he was free. Before I knew his purpose he swerved quickly to the side, and leaped clean over the cliff into the churning torrent below.

I stood giddy on the edge, looking down. There was nothing but a foam of yellow and white and brown from bank to bank. No man could live in such a stream. I turned and hastened back to my cousin.

I found him lying as I had left him, with his head bent over to the side and the blood oozing from his neck-wound. When I came near he raised his eyes and saw me. A gleam of something came into them ; it may have been mere recognition, but I thought it pleasure.

I kneeled beside him with no feeling other than kindness. The sight of him lying so helpless and still drove all anger from me. He was my cousin, one of my own family, and with it all a gentleman and a soldier.

He spoke very hoarsely and feebly.

'I am done for, John. My ill-doing has come back on my own head. That man'—

'Yes,' I said, for I did not wish to trouble a man so near his end with idle confessions ; 'I know ; I have heard ; but that is all past and done with.'

'God forgive me,' he said. 'I did him a wrong, but I have repaid it. Did you kill him, John ?'

'No,' I said ; 'he leaped from a steep into the stream. He will be no more heard of.'

'Ah !' and his breath came painfully. 'It is well. Yet I could have wished that one of the family had done the work. But it is no time to think of such things. I am going fast, John.'

Then his speech failed for a little, and he lay back with a whitening face.

'I have done many ill deeds to you, for which I crave your forgiveness.'

'You have mine with all my heart,' I said hastily. 'But there is the forgiveness of a greater, which we all need alike, you would do well to seek.'

He spake nothing for a little. 'I have lived a headstrong, evil life,' said he, 'which God forgive. But it is not meet to go canting to your end, when in your health you have crossed His will.'

Once again there was silence for a little-space. Then he reached out his hand for mine.

'I have been a fool all my days. Let us think no more of the lass, John. We are men of the same house, who should have lived in friendship. It was a small thing to come between us.'

A wind had risen and brought with it a small, chill rain. A gust swept past us, and carried my cast-off cloak into the bushes. 'Ease my head,' he

gasped, and when I hasted to do it I was even forestalled. For another at that moment laid his hand on him, and with a little shudder his spirit passed to the great and only Judge of man's heart.

I walked off for help with all speed, and my thoughts were sober and melancholy. Shame had taken me for my passion and my hot fit of revenge —ay, and pity and kindness for my dead opponent.

The old days when we played together by Tweed, a thousand faint, fragrant memories, came back to me ; and in their light the last shades of bitterness disappeared. Also the great truth came home to me as I went, how little the happiness of man hangs on gifts and graces, and how there is nought in the world so great as the plain virtues of honour and heart.

D E N T'S.



EW towns of its size possess the same world-wide celebrity as sleepy old Worcester, noted alike, as our geography books used to say, for its porcelain, its sauce, and its gloves, and contributing to the enjoyment of the gourmet, the delight of the art-collector, and the satisfaction of the fashionable world. It is in keeping with the character of the town, with its fine cathedral and its general air of old-worldness, that all its three famous products are of the nature of luxuries, rather than necessities of life.

Dent's great glove factory (which, by the way, has no longer any connection with the family whose name it still bears) claims to be the largest as well as the oldest business of the kind in the world. For well over a century it has held a foremost place in the trade, and it still shows no sign of giving way before its numerous competitors. The firm employs in Worcester some twelve hundred indoor workers, and from fifteen hundred to two thousand outdoor, besides many others, who in the outlying villages, and even as far as distant Devonshire, are engaged in the production of hand-made goods.

The visitor to the factory, which is a veritable hive of busy industry, steam-power being used to only a very slight extent, is sure of a courteous reception ; and although there is not here, as in the Porcelain Works, an official specially detailed to attend to strangers, he will have every facility afforded him for making himself acquainted with all the processes of manufacture going on within the huge four-storied building.

First, in the stock-rooms, he will see pile upon pile of skins of all sorts, stored as they have been received, in their half-dressed condition, from the leather-workers of the Continent. For most of these—chevrettes, kids, and lambskins—the chief sources of supply are Russia and the highlands of Germany. Then there are the reindeer-skins, with their beautifully soft texture, and the heavy Cape sheepskins used in the manufacture of driving and riding gloves. English leather, of any kind, is of very little value for glove-making, being generally too porous. Indeed, it is almost a pre-requisite that the skins to be used should, in the living animal, have been covered with hair rather than wool.

After having been stored for some months to allow the dressing thoroughly to permeate them,

the skins are carefully assorted according to size and quality, and are then subjected to a thorough washing in enormous rotary vats, from which they are removed to be again dressed with water in which the yolk of eggs has been mixed. This process is necessary to give them the required softness, and several hundred thousands of eggs are thus used every year.

The skins are now ready for dyeing, which is done either by immersion in great revolving cylinders, or 'tumblers,' where they are kept in continual motion till the required shade has been obtained, or by the much more delicate process of brushing, which demands a considerable amount of skill, and is employed only when it is desired to keep the inner side of the glove white, as for the lighter and finer kinds of goods.

After dyeing, the skins are quickly dried at a temperature of about 120° , and are then said to be 'in the crust,' a technical term which very well describes their hard, shrivelled appearance. In this state they are much darker in colour than the finished glove is intended to be, a medium shade of brown being, in the crust, scarcely distinguishable from a soot black. But now the staker takes them in hand, and, by drawing them in all directions over a rounded metal edge, he soon restores them to their natural elasticity, and at the same time very greatly reduces the depth of colour. Taking up a dirty-looking bit of leather, which to the unpractised eye seems absolutely worthless, he turns out, in less than two minutes, an exquisitely soft skin of the most delicate fawn or pearl-gray hue.

The skins are now ready for paring, or doleing, a process which requires great skill and care on the part of the operator. Indeed, all the labour in connection with this industry is of a highly skilled character, the apprentices, in some branches of the work, being strictly indentured for seven years. By the paring, which is done with a keen-edged knife of a special shape, the thickness of the skin is reduced and made uniform over the whole surface ; and, at the same time, the roughnesses of the under side are removed, so that it presents a smooth and pleasant surface to the hand. The very large amount of waste from this process is collected, and forms a valuable dressing for the land, readily bought up by the farmers in the neighbourhood.

This is the last of the preparatory processes, and

the skins, having been again assorted according to size and quality, are now ready to pass into the cutting-room, where the actual glove-making begins. There they are first of all cut into 'tranks,' or square pieces of the size of a glove, the back and front being in one piece, and from the scraps remaining the thumb-pieces and fourchettes are taken. The tranks, with their fittings, then pass into the punching-room, where, by one movement, the glove is punched out by means of a press bearing a block-knife of the required shape. The thumb is then similarly punched out from its own piece, an ordinary kid skin of average size giving usually three complete gloves.

The cut gloves again pass through the sorter's hands, and from him they are sent on to the women's side of the factory. Here one is struck at once with the cleanliness and freshness of the workrooms, as well as with the cheerful and neat appearance of the workers, and the frank relations that seem to exist between them and their employers. Indeed, this last-mentioned point is observable over the whole factory, the entire freedom from restraint of the operatives under the manager's eye, and the perfectly respectful frankness with which they supplement his explanations, being pleasantly noteworthy.

The first process in the women's department is the 'pointing,' or ornamental stitching generally seen on the backs of gloves. Most of this is done by hand, and with a dexterity that is simply bewildering to the unskilled onlooker; the glove, previously pierced by machinery, being held firmly

on a cleverly devised frame, and the needle working back and forward more rapidly than the eye is able to follow. It would be difficult to imagine anything more nearly approaching the precision and quickness of a delicate machine than is exhibited by the fingers of some of the girls engaged in this work. The writer, standing with watch in hand, saw the three double lines of heavy tambouring on the back of a dogskin driving-glove begun and finished within two minutes.

After the pointing comes the closing, which is done by sewing-machines of special and most ingenious design, several different kinds being used for different classes of work. As unlike as possible to the familiar family 'lock-stitch' are these bits of curious, and even dainty, mechanism, some of which are positive triumphs of the inventor's art. Especially fascinating is the machine used for closing the fingers of one class of gloves. In this machine the needle works into the point of an upright steel finger, which carries within itself a shuttle of diminutive size, and the glove, fitted over this finger, is fed automatically upwards.

The finishing, which is the next process, and includes button-holing, binding, &c., is mostly done outside; then follows the final examination and sorting; next the stamping and boxing; and then the finished gloves pass into the warehouse, from which they are sent out to every corner of the civilised world, having gone through between twenty and thirty pairs of hands before they are ready to adorn those of the fortunate person for whom all this labour and skill are expended.

QUEEN E L M A.

CHAPTER III.

I ENTERED the Queen's apartment feeling a little nervous on being for the first time in my life ushered into the presence of royalty.

'You had better take this opportunity of handing her that letter,' whispered the Prince.

'All right.'

We passed through a room in which several ladies were sitting. They cast down their eyes modestly as we passed. And then I came into the Queen's presence. She was sitting in a chair by the side of her writing-desk, her cheek on her hand, her eyes looking into vacancy. As we entered she rose with an air of weariness.

She was undoubtedly a magnificent specimen of womanhood, and I could understand the warning I had received not to lose my heart; but, though I am susceptible enough, in all conscience, to female charms, I could see at the first glance that there need be no fear for me in this case. It is not only beauty in woman which attracts a man; and beyond Queen Elma's physical attractions I could

see no sign of others of a more alluring kind. She was tall and voluptuous in appearance, with black hair, full red lips, and dark, stormy eyes. Her complexion had a dusky tinge, which added to her gipsy-like appearance. She looked a woman to be feared rather than loved.

She received me most graciously.

'Welcome to Herzoglia,' she said.

I bowed and kissed her extended hand. She regarded me somewhat critically.

'You are a very apparent Englishman,' she was pleased to say, 'and the English are our traditional friends. I can always depend on your uncle for good, sound advice.' I thought she looked at the Prince with defiance in her air. 'He, at any rate, has no ulterior ends to serve.'

The Prince smiled a little forcedly.

'I trust I may be allowed to reckon myself one of your Majesty's friends,' I murmured.

'I have need of them, God knows,' she replied, almost passionately, and speaking, as it seemed to me, at the Prince.

'He is not always the friend who advises

according to one's inclinations,' observed the Prince, with some sententiousness. He spoke urbanely enough, but there was a look of irritation on his face.

The Queen made a little impatient movement. 'If we could only distinguish between friends and enemies! But when they are indistinguishable it is best to take no advice at all, but to act according to one's judgment.'

The Prince shrugged his shoulders. 'The few words of caution I have ventured to address to your Majesty have been prompted by a single-hearted desire for your welfare.'

'No doubt,' said the Queen. The irony in her tone was apparent. 'And yet I am as strongly advised by others to the course from which you endeavour to dissuade me.'

'I am convinced that the step you contemplate is a false one, and I can only hope that this may be made clear to you before it is too late.'

'Who will make this clear to me?' asked the Queen scornfully.

The Prince looked at her steadily.

'I hope to be able to do so,' he replied slowly. The Queen looked up at him quickly.

'Speak out,' she cried. 'For the last few days you have hinted mysteriously at something in your knowledge. Now is the time to disclose it. Tell me now, or be for ever silent.'

'You mistake me,' replied the Prince hastily. 'I have nothing to tell.'

A look of relief passed over the Queen's face. The Prince went on :

'Your Majesty believes that the Count is influenced solely by his love.' There was an almost imperceptible sneer in his voice; but, although slight, it was not unnoticed by the Queen. She sprang to her feet—a tall, queenly figure.

'Is that so surprising?' she asked proudly.

'It is surprising it is not so,' said the Prince; 'but it is not so, or common rumour has much maligned the Count.'

The Queen brought her hand down heavily on the table by her side, and a flower-vase that stood on it fell and broke. I remember watching the little stream of water as it made its way to the edge and trickled to the floor.

'Lies!' she said fiercely. 'All lies! He has told me so himself.'

'I am glad,' responded the Prince suavely. Then he looked round and his eye met mine. 'But our conversation cannot interest our young friend.'

The Queen glanced at me with a little start. 'I had forgotten your presence,' she said, turning to me. 'But I know I can trust your discretion.' She smiled pleasantly, and I bowed in reply. 'You are doubtless anxious to attend the ball. Our Herzogian ladies will not forgive me if I detain you longer.'

The Prince looked at me keenly. 'Have you not forgotten something?' he asked impatiently.

'Forgotten?' I repeated stupidly.

'Have you not a letter for the Queen?' he said, with a touch of asperity.

'Oh yes, of course.' I drew the letter hastily from my pocket. 'It was given me on my way to the palace by a man who begged that I would deliver it into your Majesty's own hands.'

The Queen took it from me carelessly and threw it on the writing-table. 'I will look at it presently.'

'He urged its importance,' observed the Prince. There was a curious look in his eyes which did not escape the Queen.

'How did you know that?' she asked sharply.

'The Prince was with me at the time,' I put in.

'Ah,' said the Queen scornfully; 'no doubt, then, the Prince is already informed of its contents.'

The remark was insultingly spoken, and I was not surprised to see the Prince bite his lips.

'You are mistaken,' he said quietly, shrugging his shoulders deprecatingly; 'but in these times of stress it is unwise to delay reading any communication which may contain tidings of import.'

The Queen picked up the letter with a quick movement and tore it open almost contemptuously.

'This is my cousin Ulric's writing.' She looked over the open page suspiciously at the Prince. 'But it is not addressed to me.'

The Prince eyed her steadily. She sat down, and, pressing her lips together, began to read. I watched her face, and I saw the blood ebb slowly from her cheeks. Before the page was turned she seemed to have aged ten years.

She rose quietly and put the letter into a drawer in her writing-table, which she locked. Then she turned calmly to the ambassador.

'Oh Prince,' she said, 'as a master of artifice, how can I but admire you? You have tried persuasions, reproaches, arguments, entreaties, to prevent my betrothal with my cousin; and now—now you bring me proof of his guilt—proof that would send him to his death, if—if I desired it.'

'Your Majesty gives me credit to which I am not entitled. I am in the dark as to the purport of the letter.'

The Queen laughed contemptuously.

'I wondered at your anxiety that I should read this letter,' she said. 'I wonder no more.'

The Prince stood silent for a moment.

'Suppose I were to admit that I was the means whereby this letter was intercepted in its course, should I not have proved my right to a claim on your Majesty's gratitude?'

The Queen looked at him quickly, and then away; for some time she stood in thought. At last she threw up her arms with a weary gesture.

'Who can say? Who knows? Wherever I turn I seem to be met by intrigue. There seems no honesty of purpose left in the world.'

The Prince came a step closer.

'Am I not right in saying that this letter reveals a dangerous conspiracy against your sovereignty, of which your cousin is at the head? So much I gather from what you have said.'

The Queen's head had fallen forward on her bosom. There was a look of dejection, of wretchedness, about her attitude.

'I do not doubt you know already,' she said in a voice hardly above a whisper, 'that this letter is from Ulric to Herr Friedmann'—

'Friedmann, the Mayor?'

'Yes.'

'Pray go on.'

The Queen looked up at the inscrutable face before her with a wan smile.

'Must we play this dreary drama to the very end? You are aware of the contents of this letter.'

This time her assertion brought no denial from the lips of the Prince. He went a little closer and touched her arm.

'Will you plight yourself to a man whom you know is conspiring against you?'

The Queen stood silent, her lips pressed tightly together.

'And what if he is?' she said at length, almost defiantly. 'Has he not the right? I am the Queen of Herzoglia, but none knows better than I that if he and I had to plead before a just tribunal for the crown of Herzoglia, the award would not be to me.'

'He has sworn loyalty to your Majesty.'

'What man can swear away his birthright? No, Prince; you have launched your thunderbolt, and your victim stands unscathed.'

They seemed again to have forgotten my presence, and I too forgot I was an intruder.

'You mean,' said the Prince—and I wondered if his eyebrows would ever regain their normal altitude—'that you will persist in espousing the Count Ulric?'

'Why not?' asked the Queen.

'He has plotted against you. Even at this moment he is seeking to overthrow your throne. What woman of spirit could forgive this?'

'What will not love do?' There was a quaint tone of wonderment in the Queen's voice. She looked at the ambassador, with a half-smile on her face.

'You forgive him?'

'I—forgive him.'

She turned aside and stood pondering, her hand upon her heart.

Slavoski stood silent for some time. I thought there was astonishment on his face that his calculations, which he had deemed based on a certainty, should have proved erroneous. When he spoke again it was in a high-pitched voice that quivered with rage.

'Take care,' he cried, 'take care! You are exposing yourself to a rebuff. The Count Ulric would not marry you—no, not if you were the only woman in the world.'

The Queen turned to him half-wonderingly. Then I saw the scarlet surge over her face and neck.

'You insult me!' she said. 'How dare you'—

The Prince became calm and cold again.

'I do not insult you,' he said quietly; 'but it is my duty to warn you.'

'How dare you'—she began again, stamping her foot, and her eyes glowing with almost animal rage. The Prince held up his hand.

'Listen, Madame. My desire is to save you from the cruellest insult that can be paid to a woman—to be jilted by the man she loves.'

She clutched at her breast as if she would have torn to rags the lace that shrouded her bosom.

'Yes, Madame,' the Prince went on calmly, 'the time has come for plain speaking; and never forget I speak in your interest. It has been my duty to keep a watchful eye on the Count, and little he has said or done during recent months has escaped my vigilance. Many a time, to my certain knowledge, he has used words concerning your Majesty which I dare not repeat. Many a time has he complained bitterly to his companions of what he calls your Majesty's persistence in pressing unacceptable suggestions.'

The Queen uttered a half-articulate cry, and the agony and shame of it went to my heart.

'It is a lie!' she cried. 'It is not true. How dare you'—

'Yes, Madame, it is true, as I may be able to prove to you before the evening is at an end. But I fear I have pained you, which is far indeed from my wish. I will not longer detain you.'

He bowed and retreated towards the door. The Queen stood for a moment, the prey to conflicting emotions which seemed to tear her bosom, and then she followed him and laid her hand on his wrist.

'You have proved nothing,' she said hoarsely. 'Without proof I will not believe. Why should I take your word? I believe Ulric is faithful to me; he has promised'—

'I will not ask you to accept anything without proof.'

'Why should I take your word?' she repeated. 'I know he is true to me. I know it! I know it!'

The Prince bent his keen eyes on hers.

'If I prove,' he said in a low voice, 'that he has never intended to carry out his promise, that he has merely played with you, what then?'

'If you prove that,' she gasped, 'then—then—'

'His life is in your hands,' said the Prince almost inaudibly.

The Queen raised her eyes slowly to his, and for a moment they stood silent. Then the Prince bowed again and left the room, and I followed him. I glanced back at the door. The Queen had sunk back upon a chair; her fingers were moving convulsively, and in her eyes there was a look that made me shiver.

I followed the Prince in silence through the anteroom. As we entered the ballroom he grasped my arm.

'Let me advise you to be silent as to what you

have witnessed,' he said. 'Come, I will hand you over to your uncle.'

As we threaded our way through the assembled throng my eye fell on a familiar face. It was my friend the corporal. His glance encountered mine. He did not seem to notice my companion, for he greeted me boisterously.

'We meet again,' he said. 'This is an unexpected pleasure.'

Slavoski stopped abruptly; there was almost a droll expression on his face.

'You are already acquainted with the Count,' he asked, smiling unpleasantly. 'Curiously, I had guessed it.'

'We met in London,' I replied hastily.

'In London? But I understand the Count has never visited your city of fogs.'

'It was in Vienna that we met, was it not?' asked my recent acquaintance innocently.

'Of course, of course,' I muttered hastily.

For the first time I noticed that on his arm was the lady whom the Prince had identified as the Princess Kata. I saw Slavoski's eye encounter hers; I saw her blanch under his gaze. She tugged at her escort's arm, and he, nodding with a slightly disconcerted air to the Prince, passed on and was lost in the crowd. Over Slavoski's face an expression of triumph had dawned.

'Thank you, *mon ami*,' he whispered to me; 'you have given me the trump card.'

'What do you mean?' I asked angrily.

He was smiling broadly. His eyebrows had sprung to the heights again.

'Your friend the corporal is my friend the Count Ulric of Lapsburg.'

'You are making a foolish mistake,' I cried furiously; 'that is not the corporal.'

'Is it not?' he answered, showing his teeth. 'But we shall soon see.' He bowed ironically. 'I must leave you to find your uncle unaided, for I have pressing business elsewhere.'

Half-dazed, I watched him make his way from the room. What would happen now? He had guessed the truth, and it would not be a difficult task for a man of his resources to verify his suspicions. I turned hastily, looking in vain for the Count.

As I stood there in the centre of the ballroom, peering through the dancers for the sight of the couple who had just left me, I felt as uncomfortable as it is possible for a man to feel. The Count was betrothed to the Queen, and the formal announcement was to be made that night. He was, in fact, married to the Princess Kata, and Prince Slavoski, whose one object was to prevent the betrothal and to crush the Lapsburg faction, was in possession of the secret. Nor was that all. The Queen, whose jealous anger I had just witnessed, was in possession of evidence of the Count's complicity in a conspiracy, which, in her own words, was sufficient to send him to death.

And the thing that stung me more than all,

that made the cold perspiration bedew my brow, was that it was I who had set in train the series of discoveries that seemed likely to engulf the Count.

As I wandered about miserably, seeking him, he came up to me.

'How came you here?' he asked abruptly. 'I thought we had parted for good on the Lapsburg road.'

'I happen to be Lord Carton's nephew,' I answered. 'But what does a corporal on the floor of the Queen's ballroom?'

'Ah,' he answered, 'that was the curé's invention.'

'I would to God he had told the truth.'

'What do you mean?' he asked quickly.

'I mean that I believed what he said, and, thinking it was an amusing episode, I retailed it casually to Slavoski.'

'But he cannot know that I—'

'He has guessed. He is the devil.'

The colour increased in his face.

'How could he have guessed?' he asked furiously. Then he turned on me with flashing eyes. 'It is to your meddling that we are indebted for this.'

'I have not told you all,' I went on, a trifle brokenly. 'The Queen holds in her hands a letter of yours which proves your complicity in some conspiracy—a letter from you to the Mayor Friedmann.'

He stared at me, with consternation gathering on his face.

'How in Heaven's name could she have got that?'

'I handed it to her. It was given to me by a man in the street.'

He looked at me vacantly. 'You seem my bad genius,' he said dolefully. 'But what happened?'

'The Queen forgave'—

'Oh.'

'Because she loved you.'

He was silent.

'But now! When she hears you are married!'

He looked up and laughed.

'I have come to the end of my tether, I fear; and you, O worthy Englishman! have shortened the rope.'

'I am sorry.'

'An apology is, of course, welcome,' he replied, laughingly; 'but advice would be even more acceptable. What am I to do? Does the Queen know I am married?'

'Not yet; at least, not a moment ago.'

'Probably Slavoski has gone to her, and I will go too, and throw myself on her mercy. Poor Kata!'

'Go at once, then. There is not a moment to be lost.'

'I must see Kata first,' he said.

'You will be too late unless you go at once,' I urged. He shook his head.

'I have promised this dance to Kata,' he said stubbornly, 'and she will think me neglectful if

I omit it. A few minutes can't make any difference.'

I made a gesture of impatience, but he turned away, and the circle of dancers shut him from me.

MOULDING MARBLE BY PRESSURE.



EXPERIMENTS of a remarkable character, and which have awakened great interest on the part of scientists, especially geologists, have recently been conducted at M'Gill

University, Montreal, by Professors Adams and Nicholson, of that institution. They have demonstrated that, under certain conditions, a hard and brittle substance like marble may be moulded with considerable ease by submitting it to pressure alone.

When the experiments were commenced, the object of those undertaking them was to ascertain if it were possible, by subjecting rocks artificially to pressure under the conditions that obtain in the deeper parts of the earth's crust, to produce in them the deformation and cataclysmic structures exhibited by the folded rocks of the interior of mountain ranges and the older formations of the earth. They took into consideration the three factors that combined to bring about the conditions to which rocks are subjected in the lower portions of the globe's exterior covering—great pressure from every direction, high temperatures, and the action of percolating waters.

In the experiments so far conducted it has been attempted to reproduce only the first of these conditions. The substance operated with has been chiefly pure Carrara marble, and the process followed may thus be described: Columns of the marble, two centimetres and two and a half centimetres in diameter, and four centimetres in length, are very accurately turned and polished. Heavy wrought-iron tubes are made by rolling long strips of Swedish iron around a bar of soft wrought-iron, and welding the strips to the bar as they are wrapped round it. The core of soft iron is then drilled out, leaving a tube of welded Swedish iron six millimetres thick, and so constructed that the fibres of the metal run round the tube instead of being parallel to its length. This tube is very accurately fitted on to a column of marble, the process being accomplished by giving a very slight taper to both the column and the interior of the tube, so that the former will only pass about half-way into the latter. When the tube is expanded by heat, however, the marble passes completely into it, and fills it with the exception of about three centimetres, which are left free at each end. When the tube has cooled, perfect contact between it and its contents has been obtained, and it is no longer possible to withdraw the latter. An accurately fitting sliding

steel plug is inserted in either end of the iron sheath, and by means of these the marble is submitted to a pressure far above that which would be sufficient to crush it if it were not so enclosed.

The average pressure employed in moulding marble is 80,000 lb. to the square inch, and the machine by which this enormous power is obtained is so constructed that its force can be continuously maintained for weeks, or even months, if required. Under the pressure, which is applied gradually, and in some cases prolonged for several weeks, the tube slowly bulges, until a very marked enlargement of that portion which surrounds the marble takes place. It is then cut longitudinally, by means of a milling-machine, along two lines opposite to one another; but so firmly does the compressed marble hold the cut portions together that they have to be wrenched apart with a wedge.

This squeezed marble differs somewhat from the original. It is not quite so hard, though still firm and compact, especially when its deformation has been carried out very slowly; and it is of a dead white colour, the glistening cleavage faces of calcite being no longer visible. As to its strength, no accurate measurements have yet been made; but it will withstand a very sharp blow. Fragments of it, weighing ten grammes, have been allowed to fall a distance of eight feet on to a wooden platform, from which they rebounded without breaking.

The experiments thus far conducted prove beyond the shadow of doubt that marble, when subjected to long-continued and enormous pressure, may, without increase of temperature or the aid of any other agency, be vastly altered in size, shape, and appearance, and yet remain as solid as it was before the change in form took place. The fact that in one of the experiments the column of marble was reduced from forty to twenty-one millimetres in height will serve to convey some sort of idea of the enormous pressure employed in obtaining these remarkable results.

From the geologist's point of view, the interest in the proof of the plasticity of marble rests on the light that the experiments throw upon certain formations of the earth's crust. They clearly demonstrate that, under the conditions of pressure existing far beneath our feet, stones may be moulded into new shapes without being melted. Indeed, the deformed marble produced at M'Gill University presents, when examined under the microscope, many striking resemblances to rocks that have been squeezed, or folded, in the depths

far below the earth's surface. The experiments show that, however brittle a rock may seem to be, it is in reality a plastic substance, capable of being moulded into new shapes as surely, if not as readily, as 'clay in the hands of the potter.'

As previously stated, Professors Adams and Nicholson have hitherto attempted to reproduce one only of the conditions to which rocks are subjected in the deeper parts of the globe's crust—namely, great pressure from every direction. It is their intention, however, to reproduce more accurately, if possible, the deformation and cataclysmic structures of the interior of the earth; and for this purpose they have invented an apparatus capable of generating great heat. With

it they purpose to surround the iron tube, and, by means of steam and heat, obtain those conditions which prevail at considerable depths underground. Geologists have shown that stone formations become plastic in proportion to the distance at which they are found beneath the earth's surface, the different degrees of plasticity being due to the fact that those substances lying at the lower depths are subjected to far greater heat and moisture than those at higher levels. Professors Adams and Nicholson are confident that, with their new contrivance, they can reproduce the conditions which obtain far underground; and they await with confidence the results of their future experiments.

AN AMATEUR PROFESSIONAL.

A CRICKETING STORY.

I.

 ONGLEY,' said Smithers, coming up to me one fine Thursday evening in June, as I stood on the Easternshire County Cricket Ground idly watching some of our fellows practising at the nets, 'that wretched fellow Greene has put me in a hole.'

'How so, my worthy captain?' I inquired politely.

'He has had to go up to London to help the police track some swindling company-promoter who employed him as office-boy three years ago—before he deserted finance for cricket. I believe he was the unconscious vendor of several bubble concerns at that time, but he won't give me details. However, all I care about is that it's now impossible for him to keep his promise to go down to Delbury to play in that local match I told you of.'

'The semi-political affair?'

'Yea. It's a horrid nuisance. Colonel Minton is one of my oldest friends, and I'm awfully sorry to have to disappoint him. He has been relying on Greene's help, and in a letter I had from him this morning he says he believes the match will decide the election. They're simply mad about cricket in Willowshire, you know; and—so the Colonel thinks, at least—success at the wickets will mean ditto at the poll.'

'The opposition candidate's captaining the other team, isn't he?'

'Yes; that's what makes the position so acute.'

'Can't you send some other professional down?'

'Unfortunately, no. They've all got engagements for Saturday.'

'Then I'll tell you what, Smithers. If you like I'll take Greene's place. Of course a budding amateur won't be much of a substitute for a famous pro, but I suppose the majority of the players will be chawbacons, won't they?'

'Sure to be.'

'Very well, then; say the word and I'll go.'

'My dear fellow, you will place me under a great obligation.'

'Not a bit of it. I shall enjoy myself immensely, I expect. I always shine when the bowling's weak. When must I start?'

'To-morrow. The Colonel had arranged to put Greene up for the night, and of course he'll show similar hospitality to you. If you can manage to get away by the midday train, you'll arrive just about dinner-time. I'll wire Minton accordingly.'

'Right. You'd better mention that I'm only a duffer, though.'

Smithers laughed. 'I shan't do that,' he protested. 'I've some regard for truth, even by telegraph. Still, I hope you'll be in your best form, Longley, for, between ourselves, a good deal hangs on the Colonel's fate at the election. He has lost more money than he can afford in some foolish speculations lately, and he has been promised a decent appointment in the government if he gets returned.'

'You may rely upon me,' I rejoined; and shortly afterwards we parted.

II.

When, after a slow cross-country journey, I alighted from the train at Delbury on the following afternoon, a tall, well-set-up gentleman of about fifty years of age immediately approached me, and remarked pleasantly as he glanced at my cricket-bag:

'Mr Clifford Longley, if I'm not mistaken?'

'Yes,' I said; 'and you doubtless are Colonel Minton?'

'That is so,' he assented, and, holding out his hand, held mine for a moment in a friendly clasp.

'I had a wire from Mr Smithers saying you were coming by this train,' he went on. 'It is most kind of you—most kind—to throw yourself into the breach caused by the defection of your professional colleague.—This way,' he added breezily. 'I've got a dog-cart here; my place is some little distance off, and I have plenty to say to you as we drive along.'

We left the station together, and when I had taken a seat by my host's side he caught up the reins, and we started off at a quick trot.

'Mr Longley,' he observed after a little indifferent conversation, 'I've a further favour to ask of you—rather a strange one, I fear, but I trust when I've explained myself you won't feel affronted. You know, of course, that I'm one of the parliamentary candidates for this division of Willowshire!'

'Yes.'

'And that I am opposed by a Mr Rupert Gulliver, a well-known London financier?'

'So I understand.'

'Well, sir, this fellow Gulliver is pressing me hard. The majority for my party was only fifty-nine at the last election, and every vote is consequently of the utmost importance. This is a democratic constituency, and, to speak frankly, it is impossible to win the fight without playing to the gallery.'

'That is a frequent necessity in politics, is it not?' I asked, laughing.

'It is indeed. But you are wondering how all this concerns you, I dare say; so I'll come to the point. I hardly like to ask it of you, but I—in short, sir, do you mind keeping your precise identity a secret while you are down here?'

'I'm afraid I don't quite grasp your meaning. I'll oblige you in any way in my power, though.'

'Thank you; I'll make myself clear. The people of this locality have been informed that Alfred Greene, the distinguished young professional, is to play in to-morrow's match, and they are not aware of any change in this arrangement. I am very anxious they should be left in ignorance.'

'Oh, so you want me——?'

'To impersonate your colleague. Just so. Will you?'

'But don't you think, Colonel Minton, the deception may be discovered?'

'No fear of that. The match, recollect, is ostensibly just a friendly knock-up between the two small towns of Delbury and Blankney, and though all the players are enthusiasts, they have none of them, except, of course, Gulliver and myself, had opportunities of witnessing first-class cricket. So they have never seen either you or Greene.'

'But Gulliver?'

'I have found out that he cares nothing about cricket. In fact, he simply threw himself into this affair in the hope of making political capital by identifying himself with the Blankney team, which is much the stronger of the two. As a counter-

move I stipulated that our side should be allowed the help of a professional, and I am told the Blankneyites have been much depressed since they heard that Greene was coming. I believe now we shall win. If we do, it will give me, I should say, at least twenty-five votes which would otherwise go to the enemy.'

'But,' I still objected, 'if you will look in a cricket calendar you will see that Alfred Greene is described as a "splendid all-round cricketer," Clifford Longley only as a "fair bat."'

'Never mind that,' said the Colonel heartily. 'I'm sure in a match like to-morrow's you'll be *facile princeps*.'

'Why shouldn't I play under my own name, then?'

'Why? Well, for one thing, because the idea that Greene is against them is in itself likely to demoralise our adversaries, but principally because, to tell you the truth, I want it to be noised abroad that I have accorded hospitality to a professional cricketer, entertained him at my own dinner-table, introduced him to my wife and daughter. As I have told you, this is a democratic constituency, and anything that goes to show an absence of class prejudice on my part means votes, and votes mean the election, and—and more,' he added hastily.

'Very well,' I said, recalling Smithers's words as to the unsatisfactory state of the Colonel's private affairs, 'I will do as you wish.'

'A thousand thanks,' he cried effusively. 'And now for home; there as elsewhere, please, you will maintain secrecy. My wife and daughter are not to be trusted—my daughter especially. Women, my dear sir, cannot keep their tongues from wagging; it is against nature.'

With which trite reflection he flicked the mare with his whip.

III.

'If you have brought dress-clothes,' said the Colonel when we had drawn up at the door of the modern double-fronted villa in which he resided, 'don't put them on, there's a good fellow. It wouldn't be in keeping, you know; and besides—acting on the advice of my agent—I don't wear them myself at present. I have to attend meetings in the evening—got one to-night—and to appear in evening-dress might give offence to those electors who don't possess such a luxury.—Marshall,' he added to the man-servant who had come out to us, 'take Mr—ah—Greene's bag.'

The servant obeyed, and, having dismounted from the dog-cart, we entered the house, the Colonel directing Marshall to escort me to my room, and promising to fetch me down to dinner himself in a quarter of an hour.

I was conducted to a prettily furnished bedroom on the first floor, where in due course my host sought me and led me downstairs to the dining-room, introducing me (as the other fellow) to

his wife, who was tall and dignified and looked anæmic, and his daughter Stella, who was so extremely pretty that I felt my heart beat faster as I returned her rather stiff bow.

There was little conversation during dinner, but when the ladies had left the room the Colonel handed me a cigar and remarked sadly :

'I think I mentioned I'd got a meeting on. I shall have to be off to it directly. I'm going to expound my views on the subject of the "Re-adjustment of Local Taxation."'

'Ah ! May I inquire what your views are on the point, Colonel ?'

'You may. I have none—none whatever.'

'What will you do, then ?'

'I shall do as my opponent does, Mr Gr—Longley ; I shall utter platitudes. At election times they fizz like champagne ; afterwards they subside like soda-water.'

'You deserve to be elected, Colonel.'

'I hope so, sir ; I hope so,' he replied. Then, when we had smoked and chatted a few minutes longer, he rose from his chair and asked whether I would like a game at billiards.

'Very much ; but you have no time to play now, have you ?'

'Oh, I meant with my daughter. She's by no means a tyro, I can tell you. She has lived a great deal in the country, and consequently knows more about games than she does about most things. On politics, for example, she has very crude ideas—talks about consistency and so forth. Never mind that, though ; come with me and I'll take you to the billiard-room. But you won't forget your rôle while I'm out, and give the conversation too academic a turn—eh ?'

With this warning, the Colonel led the way to a well-equipped billiard-room, where he left me with a promise that his wife and daughter should join me ere long. I began knocking the balls about, but my thoughts were of Stella, the beautiful Stella !

She and her mother soon entered, and the elder lady, with a polite wish that we might enjoy a pleasant game, settled herself in a comfortable easy-chair at the far end of the room, and opened a volume she held in her hand. Stella and I, not without some constraint, commenced a hundred-up, but before we had scored twenty Mrs Minton had fallen asleep.

'Mother's off for an hour,' observed Stella, speaking with more animation than she had hitherto displayed. 'I—I'm so glad.'

So was I, though I refrained from saying so. 'Perhaps her book is uninteresting ?' I hazarded.

'Uninteresting ? Certainly not. It's *Diana of the Crossways*, by Meredith. He's a very great novelist, you know.'

'Really ! And do his works often affect Mrs Minton in this way ?'

'Well, yes ; that is—'

'A drawback to an obscure style, is it not ?'

She glanced up at me quickly, but did not pursue the subject. 'It's your break,' she said severely.

'You don't play badly,' she resumed when I had scored thirty-three and left her to negotiate a double balk. 'Are you—when the cricket season is not on, I mean—employed anywhere as a marker ?'

'A marker !' I began rather indignantly ; then recollecting myself, I said smilingly, 'Ah yes, sometimes at least. How did you guess ?'

'I have heard that markers can generally play well. But now, Mr Greene, I have something very serious to say to you : I want you to do me a favour.'

'Confound it ! more favours,' I thought ruefully. 'Very pleased, miss' ('miss' was decidedly good), I said aloud. 'Of what nature ?'

'I want you to do your best to lose to-morrow's match.'

'To lose it !' I cried, astonished. 'This is extraordinary. Your father is most anxious it should be won. You don't differ from him in politics, surely ?'

'No, no,' she said. 'I care nothing for politics, but a great deal for truth, and most of all—she lowered her voice—'for my father's honour.'

She paused. 'You are scarcely explicit,' I submitted.

'I—I cannot explain fully,' she said slowly, 'but you may trust me.'

'And yet you won't trust me ?'

'I would if— But first will you do what I wish ?'

'I don't suppose I can influence the result much one way or the other,' I temporised.

'Oh, but you can. Father will only be nominally captain of the Delbury team ; he will consult you in everything.'

'You think it will be a case of *Ego et Rex meus* between us, do you ?'

She started.

'The expression occurs in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII.*' I went on hastily. 'One winter, when I—I couldn't get a job as billiard-marker, I—I was taken on as a super in a theatre.' (And she had just told me she cared a great deal for truth !)

'Indeed,' she said. 'You have had a varied career. But, again, may I depend on you ?'

'I wish I could see how I could serve you.'

'Are you a good batsman ?'

'I'm generally considered so.'

'Then go in last. Do you bowl well ?'

'Excellently.'

'Then get father to put you on right through the innings. Send along plenty of wides when you bowl ; be sure to hit your wicket when you bat.'

'Too crude,' I protested.

'You decline to help me, then ?' and, despite her attempted flippancy, there was a tremulous note in her voice.

'I—I must have time to think. Remember, I am at present pledged to help your father.'

'You will help him by doing as I suggest; he—poor father—doesn't know all.'

'Neither do I. Far from it.'

'Perhaps—only perhaps, mind—I will tell you more in the morning.'

'Thank you. You may be certain I—'

'Will put that red in the top pocket; of course you will,' she laughed; and looking up, I noticed that her mother was on the point of waking.

IV.

When, with the rest of the household, I had retired to bed, I lay for hours trying to hit upon some plan whereby I could oblige Stella without breaking faith with her father. But no practicable method suggested itself, and I could only take refuge in the weak hope that the weather might prove so unfavourable as to necessitate a postponement of the match. Then I fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamt I was at the wicket hitting wides bowled by the Colonel straight into the hands of Stella, who stood at long-off. I awoke to find the morning sun streaming in at the window, and the first object that met my gaze was a pink envelope which had been pushed underneath the bedroom door. I jumped out of bed, picked it up, and saw that it was addressed to 'Mr Greene.' Hurriedly tearing it open, I read these words:

'DEAR SIR,—Referring to our conversation of yesterday evening, I have fully considered the question of telling you more, but have come to the conclusion that to do so would not be right. I can, therefore, only appeal again to you to trust me, and assure you once more that in following the course I propose you will be acting in my father's best interests.—Yours sincerely,

STELLA MINTON.'

'Stella Minton,' I murmured. 'What a pretty signature! What a provoking, stupid, altogether delightful girl! I wonder whether I shall see her at breakfast.'

I did, and she looked wistfully at me out of her large gray eyes, but spoke no more than civility demanded; while the Colonel, on the other hand, annoyed me with a long string of questions as to the best way to make certain of winning his confounded match.

When we had donned our flannels, however, and were about to start for the ground, Stella, taking advantage of her father's momentary absence, ran up to me in the hall, and murmuring softly, 'I shall follow you soon; I rely on you, remember,' was gone before I had time to reply.

Arrived at the field, the Colonel and I found a motley crowd awaiting us, and I was introduced as Mr Greene to at least a score of persons—Gulliver amongst others—who seemed more or less gratified at making my acquaintance. Remembering how nearly I had betrayed myself to

Stella, however, I said as little as possible, and merely met compliments on my supposed prowess with a grim smile. Not that, from one point of view, I should have regretted discovery; it would at all events have relieved me from the necessity of giving further offence to Miss Minton, for whose good opinion I already felt that no sacrifice (less than the one she wished me to make) would have been too great. To act falsely towards her father, however, simply because she had hinted vaguely that his honour was involved would be altogether unjustifiable, more especially in view of my knowledge of his straitened finances. In reality—I welcomed the thought—it would be acting falsely towards her. Some day—yes, some day—she would learn this, and judge me accordingly.

The Colonel suddenly broke in upon my meditations by saying gloomily: 'A bad omen, Greene; I've lost the toss. They're going to bat.'

'Indeed,' I said indifferently.

'Will you start the bowling?'

'As you please.'

'Come on, then. I've arranged the field, subject, of course, to any suggestion you may make.'

The match began disastrously for the Blankneyites, for two wickets fell for three in my first over. One of them was Gulliver's, which, considering that he was a heavy, bloated-looking person, was scarcely surprising.

Then, however, as the evening newspapers would remark, there was a useful stand made by two players who, as I afterwards learnt, were, like myself, members of the legal profession. Not till the score was fifty-eight did either of them give a chance, but at that point, while, it not being my over, I stood at long-on, a catch came straight into my hands. That I failed to take it was due to my having just noticed among the onlookers the muslin-clad figure of Stella, and beside her, talking eagerly, Mr Rupert Gulliver. A pang of jealousy shot through me, and—I dropped the ball.

I made up for the error by getting a wicket soon afterwards, but, on the whole, the play was much better than I had anticipated, and the Blankney innings ultimately realised the respectable total of one hundred and sixty-three.

Then came the adjournment for luncheon, and, as was perhaps inevitable, I encountered Stella.

'You did well to miss that catch,' she observed, 'but your bowling was hardly what I had expected.'

'Oh! Surely it was bad enough to please you?'

'By no means. After what you said, I was surprised it was so good. Mr Gulliver was surprised too, but for another reason.'

'Why? What did he know about it?'

'He said he had always understood you were a left-handed bowler, whereas here you were using your right hand.'

Now here was a predicament! Gulliver was correct. How on earth was I to explain the discrepancy?

'The fact is,' I said in a low tone, 'I—I'm ambidextrous.'

'Ambidextrous?'

'Yes. I—I play left-handed in county matches, and right-handed in local matches. It keeps me in form, don't you know?'

'Really? Mr Gulliver said, too, that you weren't at all like the portrait he saw of you in the *Weekly Cricketer*.

'No,' I rejoined desperately. 'It was a—a bad likeness, and I've changed a good deal since it was taken. You'll remember the Latin saw, *Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur*'—

'Changed—in three weeks?' she interrupted.

'One ages rapidly in these days,' I said weakly. Inwardly I wished Gulliver—elsewhere.

'Still,' she remarked, 'it has struck me once or twice that you are not acting openly with me, and I—I hate deception.'

It was fortunate that at this point some friends of hers came up and enabled me to beat a retreat.

I need not describe in detail the innings of the Delbury eleven. Suffice it to say that I went in first wicket down, and was still handling the willow when the last man came in. Our score was then eight behind our opponents', and with a view to retaining Stella's favour, I sincerely hoped the fate of the match would not depend on me. I was not to be gratified, however. The other fellow made a lucky snick for three; on the impulse of the moment I sent a loose ball to the boundary for four; and then we ran a bye. A ringing cheer came from our partisans among the crowd. We had tied with Blankney. It was the end of the over, and it would be for me to make the winning hit.

Stella was seated at the far end of the ground, and I trembled as I imagined that even at that distance I could detect the earnest pleading of her eyes as she looked towards me.

I placed myself in position; then with a gasp I withdrew. Coming across the ground was the man I was impersonating—Alfred Greene!

He was accompanied by a tall, sharp-featured individual, dressed in black. They walked briskly towards where I stood. I awaited them as if in a dream.

But, to my astonishment, they passed me by and walked up to Gulliver.

'This is the man,' said Greene, and the sharp-featured person immediately placed his hand on Gulliver's shoulder.

'Mr Rupert Gulliver,' he cried, 'I hold a warrant for your arrest for fraud in connection with the "South Silurian Gold Syndicate." I trust you will come with me quietly and avoid unnecessary trouble.'

So ended the match between Blankney and

Delbury—in a tie; and so ended the parliamentary candidature of Colonel Minton's opponent. Gulliver, owing to a legal quibble, eventually managed to avoid punishment; but the gentleman who was put up at the last moment to fight against the Colonel in his stead was unable to avoid an extremely handsome defeat.

As for me, I became a frequent visitor to Delbury; and when, some months later, I had managed to persuade Stella that I had only been guilty of a venial offence in deceiving her, and that I was in every way worthy to become her husband, I asked her once more why it was she had made such a strange request regarding the match. This time she enlightened me.

'It was because,' she said, 'Mr Gulliver had told me that if that match were won by my father's side he would be forced to make public a forgotten but most dishonourable action on father's part.'

'And that was?'

'When father was in parliament before, he once made a speech attacking his own party, and—and he voted with the other side.'

'Is that all?'

'All? Surely it is enough. What—this is what Mr Gulliver said—is thought of a soldier who, when the drums are beating and the colours flying, and the bugle sounding for the battle, suddenly deserts, and goes over to the enemy? And Mr Gulliver explained that a politician who is false—even temporarily—to his own party is every bit as bad. Was he not right?'

'No, Stella,' I said, drawing her to me. 'He was deceiving you—wilfully, wickedly deceiving you. The desertion of a soldier proves him to be a traitor; the desertion of a politician merely shows that he is a man animated by motives of truth, or—there is just the doubt in some cases—of expediency.'

'In father's case there can be no doubt?' she submitted, with some anxiety.

'Certainly not, darling,' I answered, as I stroked her fair hair caressingly.

THE BOOKWORM.

MEN call him 'Bookworm'—and he lives alone
Within an old-time mansion, where the doors
Are seldom oped, and where the polished floors
Resound with footsteps rarely, save his own.
One room he loves: and there his years have grown
To winter 'mong his books; and there he pores
Upon those thoughtful friends, who yield their stores,
And ask no questions of a time long flown.
But when the night comes down, and lamps are trimmed
And curtains drawn, he leaves his books and pen,
And seeks the hearth, where o'er a tarnished-rimmed
And faded picture lonely hangs; and then
He sits and smokes; and, through the air blue-dimmed,
He sees and lives his summer o'er again.

J. J. BELL.